

ALASKA PIONEER HOME		P&P No: 08.05
Title: Norovirus		Approval: D. COTE
Key Words: Symptoms, Precautions, Resident Care, Visitors		
Team: All Employees	Effective Date: 8/1/12	Page: 1 of 4

PURPOSE

To provide information about the norovirus and procedures to be taken when caring for residents at the Alaska Pioneer Homes (AKPH) who are infected with the norovirus.

POLICY

A safe, healthy environment is maintained at the AKPH for residents, visitors, and staff by minimizing exposure to the norovirus.

DEFINITIONS

Norovirus is a highly contagious viral infection that causes acute gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. It is the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the United States.

PROCEDURE

I. Norovirus

- A. Highly contagious and spreads easily.
 1. Anyone can get norovirus and they can have the illness multiple times during their lifetime.
 2. Outbreaks of norovirus are common due to the ease of transmission.
 3. People with norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to 2 weeks after recovery.
 4. Norovirus is found in the vomit and stool (fecal matter) of infected persons.
 5. Norovirus spreads rapidly in closed environments like assisted living homes.
 6. People can become infected with the virus by:
 - a. Eating foods or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus.
 - b. Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, then placing their hand in their mouth.
 - c. Having direct contact with another person who is infected, such as caring for a resident who is infected.
 - d. Sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is infected.
 7. Food and drinks can easily become contaminated with norovirus.

Title: Norovirus

- a. The virus is microscopic and a small number of viral particles cause illness.
- b. An infected person sheds billions of viral particles into the environment.
- c. These shed viral particles can get into food or water and cause illness.
- d. Foods can be contaminated by:
 - 1) Direct contact with contaminated hands.
 - 2) Direct contact with work surfaces that are contaminated with infectious stool or vomit.
 - 3) Tiny droplets of vomitus that spray through the air when an infected person vomits.
 - 4) Food handlers before being delivered to a Home.
- e. Persons working with food who are sick with norovirus are a risk because they handle the food and drink that many other people consume.
- f. Outbreaks of norovirus occur in places like assisted living homes, where people consume water and food prepared or handled by others.

B. Symptoms of norovirus

- 1. Diarrhea.
- 2. Nausea and vomiting.
- 3. Stomach cramping.
- 4. Feeling extremely ill.
- 5. Dehydration can result from the loss of body fluids.
- 6. Usually lasts 1-2 days.

C. No treatment for norovirus infection

- 1. There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection.
- 2. There is no drug to treat people with norovirus illness.

D. AKPH precautions followed by staff

- 1. Staff does not work in the Home while ill and until 3 days after feeling better.
 - a. Ill food handlers are dismissed from work for at least 3 days after diarrhea and vomiting have ceased.
- 2. Proper hand hygiene is followed by washing with soap and water.
 - a. Staff, residents, volunteers, and visitors must be more conscientious and wash hands more frequently while in the Home.
 - b. Hand sanitizer gels can be used if hand washing facilities are not immediately available.
- 3. Nursing staff wears disposable gloves and gown when caring for ill residents.
 - a. Gloves and gown are changed and hands are washed before caring for each resident.

Title: Norovirus

- b. Set aside pieces of commonly used equipment, like blood pressure cuffs, for use in affected areas.
 - 4. In the kitchen, fruits and vegetables are carefully washed and shellfish are thoroughly cooked.
 - 5. Regular dishwashing removes and destroys the norovirus pathogen.
 - 6. Contaminated surfaces are cleaned and disinfected after an episode of illness, such as vomiting or diarrhea.
 - a. Housekeeping staff wears disposable gloves when cleaning contaminated surfaces.
 - b. Chlorine bleach (sodium hypochlorite) solution works best to disinfect surfaces.
 - 1) One tablespoon bleach in one gallon water (200 ppm) for stainless steel food contact items.
 - 2) One third cup bleach in one gallon water (1000 ppm) for non-porous surfaces, tile floors, counters, sinks, toilets.
 - 3) One and one half cup bleach in one gallon water (5000 ppm) for porous surfaces, wood floors.
 - c. Quaternary ammonium compound (Quat) is a commonly used disinfectant and is not effective against norovirus.
 - d. Surfaces are cleaned and disinfected more frequently, especially bathrooms, bathtubs, toilets, and areas commonly touched, such as handrails, doorknobs, telephone receivers, and computer keyboards.
 - 7. Laundry is thoroughly washed and clothing and linen that are soiled with vomit or stool are handled carefully, to avoid spreading the virus.
 - a. Cloth is laundered with detergent at the maximum cycle length with hot water and machine dried hot.
 - 8. Skilled nursing service providers that visit several facilities each day, such as therapists and home health nurses, are counseled about the outbreak and infection control when they visit the Homes.
- E. Caring for residents with norovirus
- 1. Residents with symptoms are reported to the infection control nurse.
 - 2. Ill residents are placed on contact precautions and are segregated to their rooms until 48 hours after the vomiting and diarrhea have ceased.
 - 3. Group activities are discouraged among affected residents on neighborhoods until the norovirus outbreak is over.
 - 4. Staff decreases feelings of segregation among ill residents by checking with the residents more frequently and encouraging family members to make frequent telephone calls to the resident.
 - 5. Residents are not moved from an affected area to an unaffected area.

AKPH P&P No. 08.05	Effective Date: 8/1/12	Page: 4 of 4
Title: Norovirus		

6. If a resident is transferred to the hospital, the hospital is notified that the resident is coming from a facility where an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis is occurring.

F. Visitors and volunteers

1. Visitors and volunteers are encouraged to wash their hands while in the Home.
2. Visits from elderly persons, young children, and persons with underlying medical conditions are discouraged until the norovirus outbreak is over.
3. Ill family and friends are discouraged from visiting the Home.
4. Ill volunteers are prohibited from working in the Home until 3 days after vomiting and diarrhea have ceased.

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

New: 1/1/12

Revised: 2/28/12; 7/20/12

Reviewed: 2/28/12

ATTACHMENTS

REFERENCES